

ciate his merits as an artist, an author, and a member of society.

John Carter is best known by his published works, which, however, owing to their large size and costly nature, and also from the capricious disposition of their author, had but a limited circulation. In 1780 he commenced a series of etchings, in folio, illustrative of "Ancient Sculpture and Painting," which he published in numbers, periodically, till the year 1794. In 1795 he commenced a similar series of plates of "Ancient Architecture," of which, in 1816, he had completed twenty-eight numbers; and on these two works his reputation as a draughtsman and engraver mainly rests.

As draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries he executed a series of illustrations of Cathedrals and other Ecclesiastical Edifices, which were engraved by, and under the direction of James Basire, and published by the Society between the years 1795 and 1813. These comprised St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster (1795); Exeter Cathedral (1797); Bath Abbey Church (1798); Durham Cathedral (1801); Gloucester Cathedral (1807); and St. Alban's Abbey Church (1810). Seven drawings of Wells Cathedral, now exhibited, were prepared by the same artist for a volume in continuation of this series, but these have never been engraved. They are characterised by the same fidelity and spirit as those in the published volumes, and possess a peculiar degree of interest from the singularity of the edifice and its adjuncts. In addition to the above-mentioned publications Carter produced some minor works which will be hereafter noticed; and he was a constant correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for nearly twenty years.

Carter was the son of a statuary or mason, and was born in Piccadilly, London, on the 22nd of June, 1749, and lived and died a bachelor. From boyhood to old age he was professionally an artist; but rather an antiquarian and architectural draughtsman than a practical architect, though he assumed the latter title in his communications to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He was never article to any profession, but left to study and practise drawing as fancy and accidental circumstances prompted. The self-instructed are usually desultory and eccentric, and such especially was the artist now under notice. In person, manners, and opinions, he manifested many singularities. If my late friend, Isaac D'Israeli, had included Carter's correspondence and peculiarities in his interesting work on the "Quarrels of Authors," he would have delineated a character full of irritability and suspicion; often wielding his pen in censure and bitter sarcasm, as well as in useful and accurate description; and again, in the excess of his Quixotic zeal, attacking the phantoms as well as the realities of "Architectural Innovation." Such a picture would have strikingly illustrated the observation of Mr. D'Israeli, that an author is "a human being who possesses at once two sorts of lives—the intellectual and the vulgar: in his books we trace the history of his mind, and in his actions those of human nature." The writer of a short notice of Carter, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*,† 1817, judiciously observes that "his valuable representations of sculpture and painting, and of the ancient architecture of England, have preserved the forms of buildings and decorations long since lost, and of many which may be hereafter demolished. These extensive and useful works were wholly executed by Mr. Carter in a free and masterly manner, with character, boldness, and a feeling peculiar to those who know the utility of every line they draw. In defence of an old relic he would brave the keenest war that pen could wage: he was never intimidated by threats, or diverted from his object by ridicule; and as he gave no quarter, so he expected and received none. But the severity and sarcasm which too often marked his writings are not to be justified. He would repeatedly declare himself 'a coward in everything but the good old cause,' which I sincerely believe; for exclusively of this he had no fixed determination. Nervous to an excessive degree, he would fancy the greatest consequences to have arisen from the most casual and trifling cause; and a dispute with a servant has brought on a

fever. To causes like this he attributed the illness which attended the latter years of his life."

Soon after his father's death he was in the employ of Mr. John Dixon, surveyor and mason; and afterwards of Mr. Henry Holland, bricklayer, in whose office he obtained some insight into the practice of building, and also in drawing architectural plans and sections. He incidentally relates an anecdote referring to this early period, as follows:—"At the funeral of the late Lord Bath, about the year 1765, I being then some 16 or 17, attended to see the ceremony, which was by torchlight, in the Abbey church, at Westminster, opposite the tomb of Edward I. in the aisle below. I stood with many others on the tomb. The crowd and confusion was so great, that several gentlemen, thinking it necessary for their own and the company's safety to defend the stairs into the chapel of the Confessor, not only drew their swords, but tore down the oak canopy above Edward's memorial to convert it into weapons: and in such state it now remains."

Being at Windsor in 1764, he made a coloured drawing of part of one of the old towers of that famed royal fortress; and from this circumstance,—with the impression made on his young and ardent mind by the imposing, picturesque, and interesting buildings of that castle,—we may probably date the birth of that enthusiastic devotion to ancient architecture which afterwards grew up with him to vigorous maturity. At the very commencement of his professional career Carter seems to have resolved on preserving all his original sketches, which ultimately extended to a large and curious collection. This series, now in my possession, fills thirty-seven folio volumes, and furnishes a sort of *graphic Auto-Biography*, or index to his travels, studies, connections, employments, and peculiarities; for, besides pen and pencil sketches of buildings, monuments, stained glass, and antiquities of every description, the collection is interspersed with letters, bills, and memoranda of different kinds. In this series are the original sketches from which the numerous plates already mentioned were afterwards etched and published, as well as many hundreds which he executed for distinguished lovers of archæology. One of his principal patrons was the late Richard Gough, who advised and instructed him with reference to the various objects likely to come under his notice in his journeys, and many of whose letters are preserved in this collection. Here, too, are the original sketches from which he prepared an elaborate set of drawings of YORK CATHEDRAL, for Sir Mark Masterman Sykes, bart.; but as the contract was not concluded when the artist died, they were sold at the auction of his property for 300 guineas.\*

It is evident from his sketches that Carter was industriously employed for more than forty years in travelling into almost every county in England to examine, sketch, and measure those venerable edifices which were so well calculated to sustain and reward his enthusiasm.‡ The series is, indeed, a worthy monument of his persevering industry; of which I cannot better convey an idea than by stating that his works on "Sculpture and Painting," and "Ancient Architecture," contain 236 folio plates, all etched by himself. The Society of Antiquaries' series of Cathedrals, &c. comprise more than eighty large plates from his drawings.

From 1774 to 1778 Carter was engaged in making designs, or "inventions," as they are called, for publication in a periodical called *The Builders' Magazine*.

In 1780, and again in 1791, Mr. Carter was consulted by the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough respecting intended alterations of the organ-screen and choir of the cathedral; and it appears that the organ-screen was finished after his drawings.

In 1780 he commenced his first great work, "Ancient Sculpture and Painting," which he states he was induced to embark in from the

niggardly conduct of publishers, and especially of one who gave him only a guinea for a drawing which he valued at 5*l.* or 6*l.* The extent and importance of this publication, which continued, periodically, during fourteen years, have been already adverted to. The letter-press descriptions were written by himself; but a number of valuable essays were contributed by his better-educated antiquarian friends and patrons, Dr. Milner, Mr. Douce, &c.

In 1786, whilst the above work was in progress, Carter resorted to the singular expedient of printing and publishing a catalogue of his principal sketches and drawings, accompanying the same with small etchings of the principal subjects, in size no larger than 4½ inches by 3½, but characterised by a remarkable degree of breadth, clearness, and effect. These "Etchings of Ancient Buildings," 120 in number, were issued in six miniature volumes, at periodical intervals between 1786 and 1793, each volume containing twenty prints, and a list of other drawings (nearly 500 in all), notes being added with the names of gentlemen for whom copies or finished studies had been made by him.

On the completion of the "Sculpture and Painting" he announced his "Specimens of Ancient Architecture," from the most remote period to the sixteenth century; showing the progressive state of that science, both in the circular and in the pointed arch, commonly known by the opprobrious term *Gothic*. "The principal design of this work," he states, "will be confined to the pointed arch, or the Gothic, in an attempt to reduce that noble style to a practical system of workmanship,—a science at this day so little understood." After a lapse of more than twenty years, only twenty-eight numbers were published, bringing down his series of illustrations to the time of Edward the Third. His morified feelings at the result are strikingly exemplified in a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, January, 1816: "The ancient architecture of England being at a stand, for want of the usual aid,—liberality of subscribers (some dead, some tired of collecting, &c.),—the author proposes, out of respect to the subscribers, and a peculiar satisfaction to himself, to meet them at any time or place, and there cast into the flames all the remaining stock, &c., of this work, and of that on the ancient 'Sculpture and Painting.'"

In 1795, simultaneously with the commencement of the "Ancient Architecture," Carter's illustrations of St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, were engraved for the Society of Antiquaries; and that unwieldy folio was followed in the next fifteen years by the corresponding volumes already mentioned. For all of these, Carter wrote the "Descriptions of the Plates," the historical matter being contributed by more learned members of the society.

Carter's correspondence with the *Gentleman's Magazine* does not appear to have commenced until the year 1795; but from that time until his death he was a constant contributor to the pages of that venerable and valuable periodical. His principal communications were a series of essays under the title of "Pursuits of Architectural Innovation, by an Architect," and their professed object was to expose to public indignation, and to express the contempt which he felt for, every innovator on the genuine characteristics of ancient architecture, and likewise for every person, whether architect, builder, or amateur, who dared to mutilate the forms or features of our time-honoured and interesting architectural remains. In his third letter (November, 1798) he exclaims—"I presume to profess myself a real antiquary, and in conformity to that character I venerate the history of my country; I venerate the names of the great, the warlike, and the good of former times; I venerate those astonishing, those magnificent fabrics, those enchanting monumental memorials which they have left behind them as proofs of their enlightened genius and skill! Thus far as an antiquary; but as an artist, who from my earliest years have been in the habit of constantly admiring their sublime performances, in critically surveying and minutely copying them, I cannot but feel in the most sensible degree any innovations made in their arrangement, or any destruction made in their several parts. And however weak my efforts may be in the task I have undertaken,—to point out to the public 'The Pursuits of Architectural Innovation,' and

\* They are described in the catalogue as "twenty-four drawings, with twelve sheets of MS. description, of uniform size, on the largest elephant paper."

† Mr. Buckler says of Carter's sketches,—"Some of them are admirably executed; and I have often preferred their boldness and character to the more elaborate copy."

—Memoir, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1817.

‡ Sir John Soane informed me that some of the adventures and peculiarities of our antiquary were described in a pamphlet entitled, "The Life of John Carter, artist."

\* "Quarrels of Authors," preface, p. vi.  
† Mr. J. C. Buckler.